

Long Beach Child Welfare-Early Education Focus Group Protocol

I. Participants:

Focus Groups to be Conducted:

(2) South Region Office CSWs that have at least one open case with a child under the age of five years old. Ideal size of the focus group = 8-10 CSWs. These focus groups should include a mix of Emergency Response Workers, Family Maintenance, and Adoption CSWs.

(1 or 2) South Region Office Supervising CSWs that consist of Emergency Response, Family Maintenance, and Adoption SCSWs.

(1) English speaking Birth Parents of children under 5 years old (with an open DCFS case) residing in the South County area (NOTE: we need to obtain a sample that is diverse in terms of both age of child and placement type, e.g. home, foster care, or relative caregiver).

(1) Spanish speaking Birth Parents of children under 5 years old (with an open DCFS case) residing in the South County area (NOTE: we need to obtain a sample that is diverse in terms of both age of child and placement type, e.g. home, foster care, or relative caregiver).

(1) English speaking caregivers of children under 5 years old that are a mix of State certified Foster Parents, FFA Foster Parents, and relative caregivers/non-relative extended family or legal guardians (NOTE: we need to obtain a sample that is diverse in terms of both age of child and caregiver type).

(1) Spanish speaking caregivers of children under 5 years old that are a mix of State certified Foster Parents, FFA Foster Parents, and relative caregivers/non-relative extended family or legal guardians (NOTE: we need to obtain a sample that is diverse in terms of both age of child and caregiver type).

II. Method

A. Sampling & Recruitment:

Screening Questions:

- Do you have at least one child (or do you currently care for at least one foster child) less than 5 years old? How old is this child(ren)?
- Do you work in ER, FM, Adoption or other? Do you have at least one child birth to five years old on your caseload/supervise a CSW with at least one child birth to five years old on their caseload?
- Race
- Ethnicity

Recruitment Letters Needed:

- From Regional Administrator Art Lieras to Birth Parents (English)

- From Regional Administrator Art Lieras to Birth Parents (Spanish)
- From Regional Administrator Art Lieras to Caregivers (English)
- From Regional Administrator Art Lieras to Caregivers (Spanish)
- From Regional Administrator Art Lieras to DCFS SCSWs/CSWs

If initial recruitment in the form of letters from the RA does not yield a sufficient sample size, we will also engage in the following recruitment efforts:

- At future trainings for DCFS workers and Parents/Caregivers, participants will be informed of pending focus groups and will be encouraged to participate; training staff will also request that trainees encourage colleagues to participate.
- Members of the Advisory Committee will be informed of the upcoming Focus Groups and can conduct outreach at their respective agencies (i.e. ChildNet, South Bay Counseling, or LBUSD Head Start).

Incentives to be Provided:

- Birth Parents and Caregivers will be provided with \$25 Target gift cards (total of 4 FGs with maximum 12 participants = \$1200) as well as lunch/dinner (pizza or Subway=\$100/Focus Group); total cost for 4 Focus Groups is \$1600 (NOT including cost of Spanish Facilitator/Note Taker or translation)
- SCSWs and CSWs will receive a lunch (total of 3 or 4 FGs at \$250/lunch = \$1000)

Budget Considerations:

- Translation of consent forms and recruitment letters to Spanish
- Spanish speaking moderator and recorder for Focus Groups

III. Focus Group Protocol

Introduction

Facilitators will provide brief introductions, a project overview, the purpose of the research, and the underlying reason that participants have been asked to participate in the focus group.

Facilitator Instructions:

1. Prior to start of the focus group the lead facilitator will:
 - Have list and contact information for each participant expected to attend the focus group.
 - Delegate roles for co-facilitators, in terms of assigning tasks (e.g “meet and greet” for participants and assisting with participants that arrive late to the focus group, completion and collection of consent forms).
 - Make sure that the room where the focus group will be held is appropriately prepared (e.g. enough chairs available, lighting, ensure that confidentiality is maintained) and configured for a focus group discussion (chairs in a circle, not too far apart, as

welcoming as possible, table in the middle for voice recorder). Set up of refreshments for participants so that they can be consumed upon arrival to help facilitate “small talk” and build rapport among both participants and researchers.

- Have recording materials (audio recorder, batteries, laptop, note pads and pencils for lead note-taker) and delegate the responsibility of this set-up to a note-taker.
- Familiarize self and other facilitators with restrooms, water fountain, entrance and exits.

Lead Facilitator Prompt:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this focus group. Today we would like to talk about child care and preschool service needs and your experiences with getting, or trying to get, these services for your child/foster child or children on your/or staff’s caseload. We appreciate you taking the time to help with this important research and we would like you to know that we could not do this without you.

The group as a whole will be asked a series of questions and we would like all of you to discuss the questions as a group. The main purpose of this focus group is to hear from you, so I will be doing very little talking. But if you need clarification about a question asked, please do not hesitate to ask. We want to make sure that everyone understands the questions being asked of you so that you all have equal opportunity to share your thoughts. Also, please remember that there are no right or wrong answers and if you are not comfortable answering any of the questions asked of you, you are not required to answer them.

On that same note, it is helpful to lay out some ground rules that will help ensure equal participation and also help make this an accepting, comfortable environment for everyone to share their opinions. This is an informal discussion, so you do not need to raise your hand to speak, but we do ask that you please not interrupt someone while they are speaking.

Provided participants consent to having the focus group recorded (by checking the appropriate box on the consent form), we will be recording the discussion so that we can concentrate on your ideas without having to take too many notes. This will also help make sure that we capture all of your ideas completely and we can refer back to them. Ms. Benson will be taking notes and also making sure that our recorder is working.

Lastly, we want to let you know that maintaining confidentiality is important to us. All participants are asked to respect the privacy of other participants. You may tell others that you were in a focus

group and the general topic of the discussion, but actual names or responses from other participants should not be repeated. I will now pass out the consent forms that have more detailed information about confidentiality, but we want to reiterate to you that everything that is said here today during the group will be kept confidential by the research staff (myself and Ms. Benson) and we hope also by the other members of the focus group. The audio-tape of the focus group will be destroyed once a transcript without identifiers has been created and checked for reliability by study team members. The audio-tape will be kept in a locked file until it is destroyed.

PASS OUT CONSENT FORMS (two per participant so they can keep one for their records), PROVIDE 5-10 MINUTES FOR REVIEW, ASK IF THERE ARE ANY QUESTIONS, COLLECT FORMS. CONFIRM THAT EACH PARTICIPANT HAS SIGNED A CONSENT FORM AND CHECKED THE AUDIO-RECORDER CONSENT BOX BEFORE BEGINNING THE FOCUS GROUP.

Focus Group Questions: CSWs

1. In your opinion, how important are early education services (i.e. child care, preschool, nursery school) for young children in the child welfare system? Why are/aren't these services important?
 - a. Specifically, in what ways do these services benefit (or fail to benefit) *children* in the child welfare system?
 - b. Their *families*?
 - c. Their *foster parents/caregivers*?
 - d. Their *CSWs*?
2. In your experience, how easy or difficult is it to access good quality early education services for children in the child welfare system? What makes it easy/difficult? [PROBES: Are these services generally available when needed? Are they affordable? Are they located conveniently for children/families in the child welfare system and/or foster parents/relative caregivers? Are you usually able to tell if a program is good quality?]
3. Do you think that children in the child welfare system have any special needs or circumstances that affect their ability to benefit from early education services? If so, please explain. [PROBES: What could early education staff do to help children in the child welfare system take full advantage of early education programs? What could others – parents, CSWs, Courts, etc. – do to help DCFS children benefit from early education?]
4. Have you ever used the DCFS Head Start electronic referral system to refer a child on your caseload for Head Start or other early education services? Why/why not? [PROBES: What happened with the referral? Did the child get early education services? What did you like about the electronic early education referral system? What didn't you like? Do you have any suggestions for how to improve this system?]
5. What kind of support have you received to help you get the young children on your caseload referred to, and enrolled in, high quality early education services? This includes, but is not limited to, help from your Supervisor, Regional Administrator, and the DCFS Education &

Mentoring Unit. What additional supports could DCFS provide you (CSWs) to help you get the young children on your caseload referred to, and enrolled in, high quality early education services?

6. Do you have any additional thoughts or comments about how we can increase access to high quality early education services for children in the child welfare system?

Focus Group Questions: SCSWs

1. In your opinion, how important are early education services (i.e. child care, preschool, nursery school) for young children in the child welfare system? Why are/aren't these services important?
 - a. Specifically, in what ways do these services benefit (or fail to benefit) *children* birth to two years old in the child welfare system?
 - b. In what ways do these services benefit (or fail to benefit) *children* three to four years old in the child welfare system?
 - c. Their *families*?
 - d. Their *foster parents/caregivers*?
 - e. DCFS staff?
2. In your experience, how easy or difficult is it for your staff to access good quality early education services for children in the child welfare system? What makes it easy/difficult? [PROBES: Are these services generally available when needed? Are they affordable? Are they located conveniently for children/families in the child welfare system and/or foster parents/relative caregivers? Are CSWs usually able to tell if an early education program is good quality?]
3. Do you think that children in the child welfare system have any special needs or circumstances that affect their ability to benefit from early education services? If so, please explain. [PROBES: What could early education staff do to help children in the child welfare system take full advantage of early education programs? What could others – parents, CSWs, Courts, etc. – do to help DCFS children benefit from early education?]
4. Do your staff use the DCFS Head Start electronic referral system to refer children on their caseloads for Head Start or other early education services? Why/why not? [PROBES: What do you like about the electronic early education referral system? What don't you like? Do you have any suggestions for how to improve this system?]
5. What kind of support have you or other DCFS staff or administrators provided your staff to help them you get the young children on your caseload referred to, and enrolled in, high quality early education services? What additional supports could DCFS provide CSWs and/or SCSWs to help you get the young children on your staff's caseloads referred to, and enrolled in, high quality early education services?
6. Do you have any additional thoughts or comments about how we can increase access to high quality early education services for children in the child welfare system?

Focus Group Questions: Birth Parents

1. In your opinion, how important are early education services (i.e. child care, preschool, nursery school) for your child/ren that are birth to two years old? Why are/aren't these

services important to birth to two year olds? In your opinion, how important are early education services (i.e. child care, preschool, nursery school) for your child/ren that are three to four years old? Why are/aren't these services important to birth to three and four year olds? How do they, or would they, help your child? How would they help you and/or your family as a whole?

2. In your experience, how easy or difficult it is to get your child/ren enrolled in good quality early education services? What makes it easy/difficult to get these services? [PROBES: Are these services generally available? Are the affordable? Are they conveniently located? Are you able to tell if a program is good quality?]
3. Does your child(ren) have any special needs or circumstances, such as their involvement in the child welfare system, that affect their ability to benefit from early education services? If so, please explain.
4. How can DCFS do a better job of working with parents to help get young children in the child welfare system enrolled in good quality early education programs? Are there things that the Court can do to help with this? What about early education staff?
5. Do you have any additional ideas or comments about how we can increase access to good quality early education services for children in the child welfare system?

Focus Group Questions: Caregivers

1. In your opinion, how important are early education services (i.e. child care, preschool, nursery school) for foster children and other young child/ren birth to two years old involved in the child welfare system? Why are/aren't these services important to this birth to two age group? In your opinion, how important are early education services (i.e. child care, preschool, nursery school) for foster children and other young child/ren three to four years old involved in the child welfare system? Why are/aren't these services important to three to four year olds? How do they, or would they, help the child/ren (birth to four years old) in your home? How would they help you and/or your family as a whole?
2. In your experience, how easy or difficult it is to get foster child/ren enrolled in good quality early education services? What makes it easy/difficult to get these services? [PROBES: Are these services generally available? Are the affordable? Are they conveniently located? Are you able to tell if a program is good quality?]
3. Do foster child(ren) have any special needs or circumstances that affect their ability to benefit from early education services? If so, please explain.
4. How can DCFS do a better job of working with foster parents and relative caregivers to help get young children in the child welfare system enrolled in good quality early education programs? Are there things that the Court can do to help with this? What about early education staff?
5. Do you have any additional ideas or comments about how we can increase access to good quality early education services for children in the child welfare system?

Closing Each Focus Group:

1. Thank participants for their time and insights.
2. Tell them how useful and productive the focus group has been.

3. Explain next steps in the process: present when the data will be published or available for them and how they can obtain a copy if interested.
4. Remind them that the researchers' contact information is on the consent form should they have any follow-up questions.
5. Follow-up: send thank you email or note to each participant later.